



## **Legislative Bulletin.....July 10, 2001**

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## **H.R. 2131— Reauthorization of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act of 1998 Through Fiscal Year 2004 (Portman)**

**Order of Business:** The bill is scheduled to be considered under a motion to suspend the rules.

**Summary:** The bill would extend the Tropical Forest Conservation Act for three additional years through 2004, expand the number of countries eligible to participate, and require that the State Department chair the interagency board that oversees the program.

Under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act, the Secretary of State is authorized to negotiate agreements with eligible countries (those with Tropical Forests, which have debt owed to the United States, and which meet certain eligibility requirements) to modify (reduce, restructure, or sell back) the debt owed to the United States in exchange for the country using the savings achieved by modifying the debt for activities designed to preserve, maintain, and restore tropical forests. The tropical forest programs are administered by a local board which by law includes a U.S. Representative.

The amounts authorized in the bill if appropriated would be used to cover the cost to the U.S. Government of modifying the loans. The bill authorizes:

1. \$50 million for FY 2002,
2. \$75 million for FY 2003, and
3. \$100 million for FY 2004.

For FY 2001 Congress appropriated \$13 million. President Bush has requested \$13 million for FY 2002, but in fact sheets released by the White House has stated that the Administration will make over \$30 million available.

The bill also expands the number of countries that qualify by deleting the word “major” in the requirement that investment reforms implemented by the country be “major investment reforms”. Proponents argue that the Treasury Department has prohibited countries such as Costa Rica and

the Philippines from participating by requiring that the countries first implement comprehensive systems to protect foreign investments.

**Previous Votes:** On March 19, 1998 the House by a vote of 356-61 (Republicans voted 161 to 60 with many conservatives voting “no”) passed the original authorizing language. (Roll Call # 63)

**Cost to Taxpayers:** CBO estimates that assuming the appropriation of authorized amounts, the bill would cost \$221 million over the 2002-2006 period.

**Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?:** The bill extends and expands a current program.

**Constitutional Authority:** The Committee cites Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the Constitution (make all Laws Necessary and Proper).

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### **H.Con.Res.170— Encouraging Corporations to Contribute to Faith-Based Organizations. (Green (WI))**

**Order of Business:** The resolution will be considered under suspension of the rules on Tuesday, July 10, 2001.

**Summary:** According to a Capital Research Center study, the 10 largest corporate foundations in the United States contribute \$1.9 billion to philanthropic causes, however, faith-based organizations only receive a small fraction of the contributions, and 6 of the 10 corporations that give the most to philanthropic causes explicitly ban or restrict contributions to faith-based organizations.

Among the resolution’s 9 findings are the following:

- 1) America's community of faith has long played a leading role in dealing with difficult societal problems;
- 2) Although the work of faith-based organizations should not be used by government as an excuse for backing away from its historic and rightful commitment to help those who are disadvantaged and in need, such organizations can and should be seen as a valuable partner with government in meeting societal challenges; and
- 3) Faith-based organizations are often more successful in dealing with difficult societal problems than government and non-sectarian organizations.

The resolution further states that: Congress **“calls on corporations in the United States, in the words of the President, ‘to give more and to give better’ by making greater contributions to**

**faith-based organizations that are on the front lines battling some of the great societal challenges of our day.”**

And expresses the “Sense of Congress” that:

- 1) corporations in the United States are important partners with government in efforts to overcome difficult societal problems; and
- 2) no corporation in the United States should adopt policies that prohibit the corporation from contributing to an organization that is successfully advancing a philanthropic cause merely because such organization is faith based.

**Cost to Taxpayers:** The concurrent resolution is non-binding and no funding is mentioned in the text.

**Constitutional Authority:** A committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable.

**Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules:** No.

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## **H.Con.Res.168— Expressing the Sense of Congress in Support of Victims of Torture. (Ros-Lehtinen)**

**Order of Business:** The resolution will be considered under suspension of the rules on Tuesday, July 10, 2001.

**Summary:** The concurrent resolution is timed to coincide with the annual **United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**, June 26<sup>th</sup>.

It expresses Congressional support for torture victims, including the 500,000 survivors of torture the resolution states live in the U.S.

The Resolution states that the House resolves “That, on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Congress pays tribute to all victims of torture in the United States and around the world who are struggling to overcome the physical scars and psychological effects of torture.”

**Cost to Taxpayers:** The concurrent resolution is non-binding and would have no budgetary impact. The resolution, does, however, mention two authorizing bills passed by Congress which CBO estimated at \$89 million over five years.

“Whereas both the Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-320) [*which authorized \$30 million over the 1999-2003 period for foreign and domestic assistance to victims of torture*] and the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 1999 (Public

Law 106-87) [which authorized \$59 million over the next five years for grants to foreign and domestic centers for the treatment of torture victims and for contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture] authorize funding for rehabilitation services for victims of torture so that these individuals may become productive and contributing members of their communities.”

**Constitutional Authority:** A committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable.

**Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules:** No.

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**H.Con.Res.174— Authorizing the Rotunda of the Capitol to be  
Used on July 26, 2001, for a Ceremony to Present Congressional  
Gold Medals to the Original 29 Navajo Code Talkers. (Udall)**

**Order of Business:** The resolution will be considered under suspension of the rules on Tuesday, July 10, 2001.

**Summary:** Though similar bills by Rep. Tom Udall and Sen. Jeff Bingaman were introduced last Congress and never acted upon by either house, the FY01 Omnibus Appropriations Act included (by reference) a section authorizing the Treasury Department to strike 29 gold medals and an unspecified number of (but possible as many as 300) silver medals for the Navajo Code Talkers.

The Navajo Code Talkers were members of the Navajo Nation that served in World War II transmitting intelligence messages as Marine Corps Radio Operators. Used in the Pacific theater and at Iwo Jima alone, the Navajo Code Talkers passed over 800 error-free messages in a 48-hour period in a language and a code that was undecipherable by the Axis Powers. Initially 29 Navajo men were recruited and the provision included in the Omnibus grants them or a surviving family member a Congressional Gold Medal. According to the Omnibus provision the number of Code Talkers enlisted later increased to more than 350. The provision authorizes Treasury to award a silver medal to each person who qualified as a Navajo Code Talker or to a surviving family member. Duplicate bronze medals are also authorized for sale.

**H.Con.Res. 174 authorizes the use of the Capitol Rotunda on July 26, 2001 for a ceremony to present the 29 Gold Medals to the original Navajo Code Talkers.**

**Cost to Taxpayers:** None.

**Constitutional Authority:** A committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable.

**Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules:** No.

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